

The Builder.

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GOING our round at the beginning of the week, we complained to the foreman at one building that there were no slaters at work, although it was most important that the structure should be covered in while fine weather lasted. "Why, Sir," said the foreman, a shrewd steady fellow (and there are many such), "this is Monday, and they have not spent all their money yet. They'll be here to-morrow. Monday is a bad day with many, though a good one for the publicans."

This set us thinking on the subject of Impudence as we followed our avocation, and we determined on asking some of those operatives who do not go to work till "their money is spent," and destroy their own health and character in bringing about this consummation as rapidly as possible, to consider whether they are acting judiciously, not to say wisely; and if they see, as they must see, that they are not doing so, to implore them to shake off the trammels of evil habits, which will inevitably not merely prevent them from rising, but press them down deeper and deeper still into the slough of poverty, degradation, and misery. To conquer a bad habit (not an easy matter) is a noble task to set one's self; the victory in such an endeavour, irrespective of good consequences, ever gives more real and enduring delight than is to be found temporarily in the indulgence of the vice so conquered. We are not about to preach a sermon, or to enter at any length into the matter; but earnestly desiring the well-being and elevation of the operative classes, and fully impressed with a conviction of their industry, skill, steadiness, and right feeling, as a body, we would urge upon the exceptions to whom we have referred, the paramount importance of regular and provident habits, the value of education, the deadly evils of the demoralizing gin-shop!

It is not merely the loss of the day's wages on the part of those who will not come till their money is gone, and that the means of subsistence and improvement are spent instead of earned, that are to be deplored, but the looseness of character which it induces,—the want of thoughtfulness and power of steady industry so necessary for self-improvement, and the certainty of a degraded and melancholy future.

In a financial point of view, remember, that when there is less work the irregular and the careless are the first discharged. Remember, too, that the man who puts by two shillings a week in a savings' bank, from the time he is twenty-one, instead of wasting it, will find himself at the age of thirty with a capital of more than 60*l.*, and, moreover, through this saving, will so improve his habits and ability, his power of intellectual exertion, as will enable him best to meet the contingencies of the moment and advance himself in society.

Do not let it be supposed we would condemn the operative classes to eternal toil,—would teach them

"To scorn delights, and live laborious days,"

or that we see the chief good in the mere saving of money. Far from this; we would strive to shorten their hours of toil, to give

them time for the enjoyment of reading and further means of improvement, and the opportunity for healthful recreation.

We have claimed, and ever will claim for an honest, industrious, and skilful workman, more consideration than he usually enjoys, and would do all in our power to help him forward in his progress. Real improvement, however, must be each man's own work. There is no royal road to self-discipline and self-improvement; it must be achieved by your own individual efforts, and can be striven for whether at work for your daily bread or in leisure.

Cultivate a love of reading and habits of reflection. "Books," said Channing, in a lecture to working men, "books are the true levellers, giving to all who will faithfully use them the society and spiritual presence of the best and greatest of our race; so that an individual may be excluded from what is called good society, and yet not pine for want of intellectual companionship."

Once open the mind to receive suggestive impressions from without, and they are found in every quarter. "You have heard," remarks one who has worked his way from the bottom, "of blacksmiths who became mayors and magistrates of towns and cities, and men of great wealth and influence. What was the secret of their success? Why, they picked up nails and pins in the street, and carried them home in the pockets of their waistcoats. Now, you must pick up thoughts in the same way, and fill your mind with them; and they will grow into other thoughts almost while you are asleep." The world is full of thoughts, and you will find them strewn everywhere in your path.

It is not for enjoyments such as these that men stop away from work till "their money is all gone." It is that they may have such enjoyments that we would earnestly impress upon them the importance of provident habits and the necessity for steady industry.

We have been asked for information as to the projected Provident and Friendly Society for building and engineering Workmen, commenced under such promising auspices. Nothing very satisfactory has yet been done, but the respectable names which compose the committee are too deeply engaged to permit a suspicion of their failure; and it would be a great wrong to these gentlemen to doubt for a moment that we shall ultimately witness some reasonable result from their labours.

Messrs. Angell, Bunning, Cockerell, Hardwick, Roberts, Tite, architects; Messrs. Field, Rennie, and Walker, engineers; Messrs. Baker, Thos. Cubitt, W. Cubitt, Lee, Piper, and Sheriff Lawrence, builders, are the conspicuous names responsible for the success of this laudable undertaking.

We are quite aware of the difficulties they have had, and must have, to encounter in working out their great object. The meeting of the 25th of January, of builders, architects, engineers, and workmen, was followed by one of the latter only,—the result of which, great as the enthusiasm displayed at the meeting was, was untoward. The workmen declined the provident part of the scheme for their future security, but warmly urged the friendly, for their immediate security against sickness and accident, by proposing a sick-fund. This was absolutely declined by the committee, as an interpretation of their friendly proposition which they could not entertain. The establishment of a sick-fund, under the vigilance of a mutual benefit or friendly society, watched and administered by interested parties, under the

usual conditions of a zealous and constant superintendence, is subject to so much fraud of simulated illness that failure is of constant occurrence; but a society as proposed, so extensive as it would become, and conducted without these essential precautions, by a body of disinterested members, would be bankrupt in six months, and would, in effect, like a poor-rate, offer a temptation to fraud on an enormous scale, defeating the moral end of the proposed society.

The sub-committee of operatives have offered no alternative to this desired sick fund; they deny the capability of workmen in general to extend their means and views to future provision; and the society, faithful to their principle, "the encouragement of provident habits," and "the aid of those who aid themselves," are left to devise such means as will by degrees be entertained by the workmen, however gradual these degrees may be; for there can be no doubt that, however proverbially prodigal and improvident many of the English artificers may be, there are numbers who do honourably effect insurance and provision for their families and their old age; and certain it is, that they are often capable of doing so, as the savings banks and insurance societies abundantly prove.

We must have patience; habits of providence are the distinguishing characteristics of a high morality and improved civilization. The evidences of the effects of these and of the contrary are apparent in our commonest experience of the workmen under our daily notice: in the long run, sobriety, education, cleanliness, punctuality, soon make a foreman, then a small contractor, perhaps a large one, and at last a benefactor; while on the other hand, we too often see the gin palace, poverty, degradation, premature decay, the union workhouse, or the gaol.

THE DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF BARBAROUS RACES.

AFRICA AND AUSTRALIA.*

FROM the Indian Islands, where the beneficent labours of Sir James Brooke may be expected to create a higher degree of civilization, we turn to Australia. Like them, this vast sea-surrounded region consists, in its remoter portions, of wild and little-known districts, peopled by strange and savage tribes of men; but, unlike them, its wildernesses appear likely long to remain in their original barbarity. And for this reason, that, while in our vast insular dependency beyond the waters of the further East, we devote ourselves almost wholly to the nurture and development, the enrichment and protection of our own colonies, and our own colonists,—in the Indian Archipelago we have commenced a system which, by encouraging native industry, protecting the defenceless from pirates, and stimulating the desire for improvement, allows the island races to run in a course of prosperity parallel with that of their friends from the distant west. Consequently, in the practices of life, and the arts of industry, we witness a rapid improvement among them; and if, in accordance with the maxim we have already laid down, that the social condition of a nation may, in a great degree, be judged by the style and quality of its domestic architecture, we view their progress from this point of view, the result of our inquiries among Sir James Brooke's subjects in Sarawak must be indeed gratifying. But turn to Australia, and explore its little trodden wilds, among its ignorant and barbarous tribes: there our standard may most justly be applied, for as the natives are among the lowest in the scale of human progress, so their domestic buildings are among the most primitive, frail, and rude constructions on the face of the earth.

Embracing, as the present sketch must do, the whole extent of two regions so immense, it is scarcely necessary to remark, that we must

* See page 93, ante.